

A RESOLUTION

24-373

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 1, 2022

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council Urging WMATA’s Bus Fleet Electrification Resolution of 2022”.

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) The Clean Energy DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018, effective March 22, 2019 (D.C. Law 22-257; 66 DCR 1344) (“Clean Energy DC Act”), mandates that 50 percent of public buses be low- or zero-emission by 2030 and 100 percent be zero-emission by 2045.

(2) The District of Columbia is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent below 2006 levels by 2032 and being carbon neutral by 2050.

(3) The District of Columbia aims to be a leader on sustainability, but many other major U.S. cities are moving more quickly to electrify their bus fleets. Los Angeles and Houston, for example, have committed to electrifying their fleets by 2030, while Chicago, New York, and Seattle (King County) are planning to do so by 2040.

(4) Electrification saves money: The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) would save at least \$350 million over the lifetime of its fleet if 50 percent of its fleet is comprised of electric buses, according to a 2020 Sierra Club report; savings would increase if more electric buses were added.

(5) Electrification reduces global warming: If 50 percent of the WMATA bus fleet is electrified, greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by more than 58,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2030, according to the 2020 report.

(6) Electrification improves public health: Even with more stringent tailpipe emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles, such as buses, pollution (both particulate and ozone precursors) from diesel buses causes a wide range of health problems, especially for children and vulnerable residents, including asthma and cancer. Electrifying WMATA’s fleet would improve air quality and therefore the health of Washington, D.C., area residents, saving them more than \$8 million per year (according to the 2020 report) in health care costs once the fleet is fully electric.

(7) While compressed natural gas buses emit less toxic pollution than diesel buses, they are only marginally cleaner than diesel buses in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, if

that. The Argonne National Laboratory found that in many circumstances, natural gas buses emit nearly the same level of greenhouse gas emissions as conventional diesel buses. So, it is imperative to eliminate the use of any form of fossil fuel in WMATA's bus fleet.

(8) In June 2020, the Federal Transit Administration awarded WMATA more than \$4 million to purchase new electric buses and charging equipment and to make infrastructure improvements. But at this point Metro has one electric bus and is planning to acquire one dozen more for a two-year pilot to study electrification – even though other cities already have electric buses in operation and the DC Circulator is already partially electrified.

(9) WMATA is currently installing electric charging equipment at two D.C. bus garages – Bladensburg and the Northern Bus Barn – and plans to run its electric bus pilot project out of its Shepherd Park Garage, so the infrastructure should be in place soon for WMATA bus electrification.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

(1) WMATA must commit to electrifying its fleet on a schedule that meets – and preferably exceeds – the deadlines in the Clean Energy DC Act, by agreeing to electrifying at least 50 percent of its bus fleet by 2030, 75 percent by 2035, 90 percent by 2040, and 100 percent by 2045.

(2) WMATA's current contract with New Flyer for 542 fossil-fuel buses to be delivered by 2023 should be the last time Metro purchases fossil-fuel buses. Going forward, WMATA must buy only electric buses. By doing so, 45 percent of Metro's fleet would be zero-emission by 2030 and 100 percent would be zero-emission by 2039.

(3) Any future upgrades to WMATA bus garages or fueling infrastructure must include electric-bus-ready designs.

(4) WMATA should prioritize introducing electric buses on routes servicing low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and environmental-justice communities that have been disproportionately burdened by pollution.

(5) WMATA should cease investment in new diesel and compressed natural gas fueling infrastructure that risks becoming a stranded asset, including abandoning current plans to spend more than \$5 million on new compressed natural gas fueling apparatus at the Shepherd Parkway Bus Division in Southwest D.C., and \$5 million to \$8 million on new diesel bus-related infrastructure at the Northern Bus Garage in Northwest, D.C., which is currently under renovation.

(6) Likewise, WMATA should not increase the percentage of compressed natural gas buses in its fleet. It should immediately abandon the board's current plan to purchase 50 percent compressed natural gas and 50 percent diesel-electric hybrid buses going forward, as stated in the 2017 Metrobus Fleet Management Plan and reiterated in the 2021 Sustainability Vision and Principles and Metrobus Fleet Plan.

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(7) When WMATA finishes refurbishing its Northern Bus Garage on 14th Street NW, it should no longer house diesel buses there, running only electric buses at that site.

(8) WMATA must publicly release a revised, accelerated bus electrification plan as soon as possible. As part of that plan, WMATA should commit to releasing an annual progress report identifying milestones, challenges, and ongoing actions that facilitate rapid electrification. WMATA must complete and publicly release this revised bus electrification plan before it signs a new contract for new buses.

(9) WMATA should immediately consult with PEPCO, if it has not already done so, to evaluate the local distribution grid around its bus garages to determine what changes and upgrades will be necessary to support charging an electric fleet.

(10) WMATA should immediately apply for applicable federal funding for use in 2022, building on the more than \$4 million grant award it received in fiscal year 2020.

(11) WMATA should substantially shorten its planned two-year pilot project with a dozen electric buses, and begin it as soon as possible.

Sec. 4. The Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Mayor.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.